

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I think the basic point is if people really care they would sit down on a bipartisan basis in this House and try to work out a package. There has been zero effort to do that in this House. Zero.

I favor a stimulus package, but it should not hold up action on unemployment compensation. Five months ago the Speaker stood in this House and promised the House would act on unemployment compensation. The time to keep that promise is long overdue. And as I said, we have had no bipartisan discussions meaningfully in this House on a stimulus package.

We need to work out specific tax provisions. For example, on the acceleration of tax rates, CBO has said that the proposal in this package would generate little stimulus relative to its total revenue loss; that the stimulus is probably small. And as to the AMT, CBO has said eliminating the AMT as done here does little by itself to change the near-term incentive for businesses to invest; its bang for its buck is small. So why not sit down and work out a package on a bipartisan basis? The time has come to do both. To pass unemployment compensation relief today, and then to sit down on a bipartisan basis in the Committee on Ways and Means and work out a stimulus package. That is the way to go.

The way we are going today is a dead end for the workers of this country and for the businesses of this Nation.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Once again we have heard those words "we eliminate alternative minimum tax." They just cannot get over it. It is not true and no matter how many times they say it, it will not be true. If the gentleman wants his promise kept, all he has to do is go back and read the trade adjustment assistance tax. What we did, this House passed over to the Senate a provision that said that if someone lost their job based upon September 11, they would be elevated for benefits as though it was related to trade. That promise was kept. It is a problem that Members have such short memories and it does not fit your political agenda. People who lost their jobs because of September 11 have been taken care of in a House-passed bill and the Senate has not done a dang thing about it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HOUGHTON), a very valued member of the committee, the author of the New York Liberty Bill.

Mr. HOUGHTON. Mr. Speaker, thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

We are going to be talking at cross purposes here as we come from different bases. We have different philosophies. We have set in concrete certain impressions that we got.

I will state how I come out on this thing. I think we have three issues. First of all, the economy is still in trouble. Secondly, people need unemployment insurance, an extension of

that; and, thirdly, we have a hole right in the City of New York and we have got to fill it. Now what is not clear is how we go about fixing these things. Members can say the alternative minimum tax is a boondoggle and it does not help economic recovery. But I could say it does. But the important thing is we get investment and people back to work. Now, that is a difficult situation. When times are good, we do not do anything. When times are bad, there is the point when the government has to step in. And frankly, something has to be done. And I do not know whether it will be resolved here or whether it will be resolved in conference. But something has to be done by the United States Government to try to put a little juice and a little impetus back into the economic recovery. If not, we are just going to be languishing and waiting.

Secondly, as far as up employment insurance, I do not think there is any question about it. I think we ought to do it. I do not think there is any argument on it.

As far as the Liberty Zone in New York, the only thing I can comment on there is time is of the importance there. There are a lot of people making decisions about where they will reestablish themselves, what buildings they will go into, and we have 20 million square feet that was destroyed down there. Maybe some of the head offices of the larger financial firms will stay there, but what about the support staff? Time is terribly, terribly important.

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from the State of Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT).

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I would say to my friend from New York (Mr. HOUGHTON) if he were the chairman of this committee we would probably have a bill here we could pass. But when we have a situation where the chairman of the committee talks for about 5 minutes about this bill, tells us it will be on the floor tomorrow, we never have a hearing on it, we do not know what is in it, how could we possibly know what is in it? We must have hearings.

Now, this bill for those Members on my side who cannot figure it out, this does two things. This is a fund-raising stimulus bill. That is all it is. They do it just before they go home so they can stimulate fund-raising when they are back in the district. That is why they did it in December when they did it. But also this is a bill for PR. If we do not get this out of here in the next half hour, a lot of those press releases that have already gone out about what we have done for the unemployed will be a little bit premature.

The fact is that if Members wanted to do something about the 8 million people who are unemployed and the 11,000 per day that are going to be exhausting their unemployment insurance and the 2,000,000 that are expected

to exhaust their unemployment benefits by the end of the first 6 months, Members would have accepted the Senate bill and do something about it. We all know that 62 percent of the people who are unemployed are not even covered by the unemployment insurance. If they want to make reform in unemployment insurance, we are glad to sit down and talk. But do not wrap it in this stuff and tell us that we have to eat all these fund-raising deals to get it for the unemployed. That is simply DOA. This bill is dead on arrival. It is DOA when it arrives in the other body.

Now, do they want to do something for people who are unemployed or not? It apparently has not occurred to them that if they do something twice and it has not worked, doing it a third time is not going to work. That is a sign of mental illness, that they do the same thing over and over again and expect a different result.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS), a member of the committee.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

The more I hear, the better I understand that talk is cheap. I want to remind those who say that the Senate, the other body, is going to accept this as dead on arrival. I also want to remind Members of this: the majority Members of the other body support a stimulus package. It is the supermajority leader who does not and want to have an issue for the fall rather than a solution today. People who are unemployed are not so much interested in a UI check.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentleman will kindly suspend.

I know the Chair has made this reminder before; but again, all Members are reminded not to make characterizations of Members of the other body and their motives or motivation in enacting legislation.

The gentleman may proceed.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I could not understand all you said.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. It is inappropriate under the rules of the House during the course of debate for Members to make reference to or characterize the inaction or action of a Member of the other body. The Chair took the gentleman's remarks to do such.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

That ruling is one that is made regardless of whether or not the statements made are factual; is that correct?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The truth is not a defense. The remark is out of order.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, so the truth is not the criteria for determining that you cannot make the statements that the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) made?